

Dear Jill,

I quoted from your last letter in order to give others the opportunity to hear about your kusala activities. Elisabeth who is for the time being in ^{Italy} ~~Australia~~ was delighted to hear from you in this way. You had a Dhamma question I did not react to yet. Your question was:

When sati of the eightfold Path (being aware of a characteristic of reality--either a nāma or a rūpa) has been developed in past lives, is it necessary to hear Dhamma in this life for sati to arise? Or is hearing Dhamma only a condition for the development of sati?

Since you underline the words arising and development it seems that you want to distinguish these two. However, when sati arises and it is right awareness, awareness of the right object, isn't there at such a moment not also development? When we use the word sati ^{at vipassana} we usually think of (even a beginning) paññā which knows a characteristic of nāma or rūpa which appears. But of course there are many degrees of knowing, and when this knowing is very vague, we would rather avoid the word paññā. Still, we can speak of a development of sati at the moment it arises, because in this way there is accumulation of sati, there are conditions that it can arise again and again. Moreover, when sati arises more often, it is aware of more different characteristics. A moment of arising of sati is a development of sati. Now to your question ~~of~~ about hearing Dhamma. Certainly, we may have listened to Buddhas in former lives. We read in the ~~Therī-Thera-gāthā~~ 'Thera-therī-gāthā' that the Theras and Therīs had to listen to many Buddhas and had to develop sati life after life until they could attain enlightenment in their last life. There may have been lives in the past during which there was no sati, maybe we were an animal. We all have accumulated different kammās and ~~in some~~ at one moment akusala kamma can produce ~~life~~ ^{birth} in a plane where there is no possibility to hear the Dhamma and develop sati. At another moment kusala kamma can produce birth in the human plane or a deva-plane and then there are possibilities for the hearing of Dhamma and the development of sati. Still, even though one is born a human, ^{of the eightfold path} there may not be opportunities for sati, ~~inspite of the fact~~ that there were opportunities in former lives. One's accumulations of kusala or akusala can lead one in different directions at different moments. So long as one has not become a sotapanna

one can still fall away from the Dhamma, there can be regression. One needs listening and considering the Dhamma. Perhaps one had accumulated sati ^{of vipassana} in a former life and in the present life one was born in a country where there was no opportunity to listen to true Dhamma. Still one's ~~accumulated~~ accumulated kusala can direct one to the right person, i.e. if one has to travel far. It all can happen and it happens. When one is ready for it, there will be an opportunity to hear true Dhamma. When one has listened and one considers the Dhamma and one has understood the right way of development sati can be accumulated more. ~~If there is a problem~~ since someone who has accumulations for sati (from former lives) finds through conditions an opportunity to listen to the Dhamma I do not think there need be any problem about this question. It is so that when one is not a sotapanna wrong practice can occur so easily, for example, one takes thinking about realities for sati, and thus listening is necessary.

W^m may have learnt many languages in former lives, but in this life we need to learn them again. It is true that some languages we learn much faster than others. ~~and~~ It is the same with sati-patthana. ^{of course sati which accompanies kusala citta which performs other types of kusala than vipassana arises also with those who have not heard Dhamma.} I can illustrate how different accumulations can direct someone in different ~~the~~ directions. Phra Dhammadharo asked a ~~Dutch~~ Dutch girl; Ruth, to take some books to me. She was in Bangkok for sightseeing and only the last three days she came into contact with the Dhamma. She had done Yoga before and liked tranquillity. She arrived in Wat Phleng where the Abbot and a 'meditation master' let her do an exercise of samatha. They reserved a kuti for her to stay overnight, but the meditation master was late. In the meantime she met Phra Dhammadharo and another sleeping place was arranged for her: Khun Diller's house. She was very glad about this because now she had opportunity to talk about Dhamma, with Susan, John (who had very recently arrived) and ~~to~~ (I do not know he is the Tom I met). She came to see me ~~and~~ stayed with her mother for more than three hours, asking questions about Dhamma. She also wants to see Phra ~~U~~ Angala, the ~~Dutch~~ Indonesian monk who stays here and who stresses samatha mindfulness on breathing very much. She is going to study the books Phra Dhammadharo gave her, but ~~how~~ whether she will be more inclined to tranquillity, I do not know.

She thought that mindfulness is 'to be with what you are doing', for instance, when cycling, be with your cycling, and enjoy nature, the birds. When you ly down on the floor, feel your whole body on the floor, etc. I started to explain about what this element is, but some people usually think that it is not an element if you don't want to have the object you like. As for feeling your whole body, I said that awareness of phenomena one at a time is vipassanā. When there is the whole there is the self, but if there is not this element than that there can be disintegration of the self.

The other day I offered food to the Indonesian monk, together with someone of the Indian Embassy. The monk explained to her about samatha and advised her to get up at five o'clock. She was before in the Thai temple in Gaya where she was taught mindfulness on breathing. She is inclined to concentrate on the abdomen. I gave her the green book and she started to study this. I do not see the monk very often, but once in a while I like to see him and see whether there is anything I can do. He asked whether I would talk again for a group (same group as before) on which occasion he also gives a lecture.

At the end of your letter you said that people ask whether why one cannot see and hear at the same time. It is sometimes hard to know what to answer, because if one says: through awareness ~~one~~ ~~will~~ know they are not satisfied with the answer. When they study Abhidhamma it will become clearer to them that seeing experiences an object different from hearing and that the eye-door is different from the ear-door. One could also ask them: how can they distinguish the seeing and the hearing as different impressions? The fact that seeing and hearing can be distinguished shows that they arise at different moments, although cittas arise and fall away so fast that it seems that they there can be seeing and hearing at the same time. If they would arise at the same time there would be a mixed impression of seeing and hearing, and it could not be distinguished. When there are likes and dislikes conditioned by what we see and hear. Like cannot arise at the same time as dislike. When we like what we see and dislike what we hear while watching a play it may become clearer to them that there are so many different phenomena which arise one after the other. And when you play a chord on the piano like seems to arise straight away. But there must be hearing also, just the experience of the sound. In this way they can begin to see that there are different realities.